

The Formation of the Marxian Revolutionary Idea

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THE Marxian idea of the great proletarian revolution that will end the pre-history of mankind and inaugurate its true history sprang into public effectiveness through the *Communist Manifesto*.¹ Well known as is the progress of this idea after its formulation and publication of 1848, we know comparatively little about the process of its formation in the preceding decade. The main cause of this unsatisfactory state must be sought in the fact that the materials for a study of the genesis of the idea have been completely available only since 1932.² In the meantime, the monographic literature on the subject has clarified many details; but a comprehensive study is still a desideratum.³

Gnostic Revolt

The starting point for the independent movement of Marx's thought seems to have been a gnostic position which he inherited from Hegel. Specifically, the Marxian gnosis expressed itself in the conviction that the self-conscious movement of the intellect was the ultimate source of knowledge for an understanding of the universe; faith and the life of the spirit were expressly excluded as independent sources of order in the soul. Moreover, this conviction was from the beginning accompanied by an attitude of revolt against "religion" as

1 This study of "The Genesis of the Marxian Idea" is taken from the writer's *History of Political Ideas* to be published by the Macmillan Company of New York. It is a section from the chapter on "Gnostic Socialism: Marx" in Volume III.

2 *Marx-Engels, Gesamtausgabe (Erste Abteilung)*, Volumes I-V, (1927-1932); and Karl Marx, *Der Historische Materialismus. Die Frühschriften*, edited by S. Landshut and J. P. Mayer, 2 volumes (Leipzig, 1932).

3 One of the best, though brief, analyses of the early thought of Marx is the "Einleitung" by Landshut and Mayer to their edition of the *Frühschriften*. Of great value are, furthermore, the sections on Karl Marx in Karl Loewith, *Von Hegel bis Nietzsche* (Zurich-New York, 1941). Of special interest for the philosophical anthropology of Marx is the section "Feuerbach et l'illusion religieuse" in Henri de Lubac, S.J., *La Drame de l'Humanisme Athée* (Third Edition, Paris, 1945). The English reader will find a report of the content of Marx's writings up to 1847 in H. P. Adams, *Karl Marx in his Earlier Writings* (London, 1940). Unfortunately the author, while reporting the contents, has refrained from analyzing the problems of Marx.

a sphere which recognized a *realissimum* beyond human consciousness. This is the position of Marx as it appears in his doctor's dissertation of 1840-41.⁴

In the "Vorrede" of the dissertation Marx attacks the "theologizing intellect" of Plutarch because it dares to criticize a philosopher like Epicure. Against such presumption Marx defends the "sovereignty" of philosophy. "Philosophy does not make a secret of it. The confession of Prometheus: 'In one word, I hate all the gods,' is its very own confession, its own sentence against all heavenly and earthly gods who refuse to recognize human self-consciousness (*das menschliche Selbstbewusstsein*) as the supreme divinity — by the side of which none other shall be held." Human self-consciousness is the god for the philosopher and "Prometheus is the foremost saint and martyr in the philosophical calendar."⁵

This central theme was elaborated by Marx in a note on the existence of God.⁶ Demonstrations of the existence of God are logically worthless, and besides they miss the point. For, all gods, whether Greek or Christian, have really existed insofar as they were a "real force" in the life of man. If gods are imagined as real they will be effective, indeed, in the minds of the believers. Nevertheless, they are subjective ideas, and they are ineffective where the subjective idea is not entertained. "Bring paper-money into a country where the use of paper is unknown, and everybody will laugh about your subjective idea. Come with your gods in a country where other gods are believed, and people will demonstrate to you that you are suffering from imaginations and abstractions." "What a particular country is for particular gods from abroad, that is the country of reason for God on principle; it is a region where He ceases to exist." The implications of the ultimacy of reasonable self-consciousness become clearer through the use to which in the opinion of Marx demonstrations of the existence of God can be put. If they cannot demonstrate the existence of God, at least they will demonstrate the existence of human self-consciousness. In fact they are "logical explications" of consciousness.

⁴ Karl Marx, *Über die Differenzen der demokritischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie*, Gesamtausgabe, volume I/1.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁶ This is a note to the "Appendix" of the dissertation, entitled *Kritik der plutarchischen Polemik gegen Epikurs Theologie*. The Appendix itself is lost. The note is in *op. cit.*, pp. 80 f.

In the ontological proof, for instance, the being that is given in its immediacy as the source of the idea of God, is not God but the self-consciousness. In this sense, all proofs for the existence of God are in fact proofs of his non-existence. Correctly such demonstrations would have to be formulated: "Because nature is badly organized, God must exist," or "Because the world is unreasonable, God must exist." But what can be the meaning of such formulations unless they mean that "God exists for a man for whom the world is unreasonable, and who therefore himself is unreasonable?" Marx summarizes the result of these reflections in the sentence: "Un-reason is the existence of God."⁷

Thus the sovereignty of consciousness and the anti-theistic revolt are present from the beginning. They enter as motives into the reflections of Marx on the philosophical situation that had been created through the system of Hegel. There are systems like the Hegelian and Aristotelian in which philosophy "closes itself into a completed, total world"; they are "nodal points" in philosophy which interrupt advancement in a straight line. Since further perfection of the system is impossible in contemplation, the successors will turn toward a philosophical practice and critique of the age. "It is a psychological law that the theoretical mind, when it has become free in itself, is transformed into practical energy, and as *will* turns against the mundane reality which exists independent of it."⁸ The spectacle of such half-contemplation and half-action is not edifying in either the post-Aristotelian or the post-Hegelian "*curriculum vitae*" of philosophy. But while the performance of the epigoni is depressing, the situation as such is inescapable.⁹ Once human self-consciousness has become completely "concretized" in a system of this kind, one cannot go back to the unreason of faith.¹⁰ One can only advance beyond the half-

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 64 and 131.

⁹ The choice of the subject for the dissertation was determined by this insight. Marx was interested in post-Aristotelian philosophy because of the parallel with his own post-Hegelian situation. The point is expressly mentioned, p. 131.

¹⁰ Marx characterizes the religious culture of the Middle Ages as "the age of realized unreason" (p. 9). In this argument lies the fallacy of Marx's thought. When philosophical speculation has become completely "concretized," that is, when it has reached the impasse of a radically gnostic interpretation of the universe like Hegel's the *only* thing a spiritual realist can do is to drop gnosis and return to the original sources of order in the soul, that is, to the experiences of faith. The "necessity" under which Marx considered himself to be, does not stem from the philosophical situation but from the fact that he was in demonic revolt against God.

hearted epigonic compromise between philosophy and world toward a complete surrender of philosophy and a radical "critique" of the world. "When Athens was threatened by a devastation, Themistocles induced the Athenians to leave the city entirely, and to found a new Athens on the sea, as on a new element."¹¹ The precise nature of this step apparently had been clear to Marx even earlier than at the time of the dissertation. At least, in the letter to his father, of November 10, 1837, we find indications that an old faith had been shattered and that "new gods" had to be placed on the altar. From idealistic philosophy, Marx had turned (at the age of nineteen) toward "searching the idea in reality itself." "Formerly the gods had lived above the earth, now they have become its center."¹²

The Theses of Feuerbach — the New Materialism

The dissertation shows Marx dissatisfied with the semi-action of the contemporary political intellectuals. He demands a transition from speculative philosophy to a "radical" critique which can be no less than an embodiment of the idea in reality through revolutionary action. This is the core of the Marxian idea. This core itself has been elaborated frequently and voluminously by Marx, and beyond this part of his work stretch the even more voluminous ramifications of detail. In the present context we must restrict ourselves to the analysis of a few documents in which the formulations are most strongly concentrated. We shall first consider the *Theses on Feuerbach*, a document that is of inestimable importance because it allows us to relate the terminology of Marx with traditional philosophical terms.¹³

On the fundamental problem of the conflict between philosophy and the new non-philosophy, *Thesis II* informs us: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in their various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it." This sentence is the key to the understanding of the aggregate of theses. If the opposition of "interpretation" and "change" were synonymous with the traditional Aristotelian opposition of theory and practice, there would be no point in the antithesis. Philosophers, of course, "interpret" the world; to deprecate this func-

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 132.

¹² Edition of Landshut and Mayer, volume I, p. 7.

¹³ Under this name go two pages of a notebook of Marx, containing eleven theses "*ad Feuerbach*." They are published in *Gesamtausgabe*, volume V, pp. 533-535.

tion of the *bios theoretikos* by pointing to the relevance (*es kömmt darauf an*) of changing the world would be senseless, for nobody maintains that contemplation is a substitute for practice, or *vice versa*. Moreover, one cannot "change the world" as one can "interpret the world"; one can only act *within* the world. Through this curious terminology, Marx reveals his intention of transposing into "practice" an attitude toward the world that is possible only in contemplation. The "practice" of Marx can change the "world," because the world is understood as a stream of existence within which the idea, or reason, moves concretely. The *logos* is not an unchangeable order of the soul and the world, to be discovered in contemplative detachment; it is a dialectically moving idea within the world; and we can come to grips with this moving idea only by embedding ourselves through practice into its historically concrete motion.

The "world" is the concrete stream of history; and the life of man is essentially part of the life of mankind in history. Man has no destiny of the soul in the religious sense, apart from the destiny of the social, historical world of mankind. From this position, Marx criticizes Feuerbach because the latter—while dissolving religion psychologically into an illusionary construction of man—still has left standing the nature of individual man as the originator of the illusion. According to Feuerbach, God is an imaginary subject, projected by the mind of man, to which are attributed the highest human values. "The absolute being, the God of man, is the being of man itself." God is "the mirror of man"; into God man has projected "his highest thoughts and his purest feelings"; God, therefore, is "the essence of man." The great turning point of history will come when "man becomes conscious that the only God of man is man himself." "*Homo homini Deus!*" The spectre of God must be laid; and man must take back what he has thrown away by projecting it into a divine, supernatural existence.¹⁴ With all this, Marx is in hearty agreement. He is not satisfied, however, with what he calls Feuerbach's dissolution of "the religious essence into *human* essence" (*Thesis VI*). Such human essence, the "religious mind" in itself is a non-existing abstract (*VI* and *VII*). Feuerbach assumes an "isolated" individual as the creator of the religious illusion. The individual, however, has no "human essence"; in its reality it is "the whole of

¹⁴ On the views of Feuerbach see Henri de Lubac, *Le Drame de l'Humanisme Athée*, pp. 23 ff., and the bibliography given in the footnotes.

social relationships" (VI). The "religious mind" in itself is a social product; an individual feels religiously because it "belongs to a specific social form" (VII). Feuerbach has correctly seen the "fact of religious self-alienation" in the creation of a supernatural divine existence and, in its wake, "the duplication of the world into a religious and a mundane world." He has, indeed, "reduced the religious world to its mundane basis." But he has not seen the most important problem: that there must be a reason why "the mundane basis sets itself against itself, and fixes for itself an independent realm in the clouds." This peculiar process can be explained only through "a schism and self-contradiction within the mundane basis." Feuerbach's analysis does not go far enough for Marx. The contradiction in the mundane basis itself must be "theoretically understood and practically revolutionized" (*Thesis IV*).

With these clarifications of the meaning of practice in mind, we must read a summarizing sentence like: "Social life is essentially practical" (*Thesis VIII*). We shall not understand the practice of social life as a basis for a life of meditation in solitude. The attributes mean that all life is social throughout, that it has no dimension of solitude; and that all life is practical throughout, that it has no legitimate dimensions of contemplation in the Aristotelian sense. Hence, "all mysteries that might induce mysticism in theory, will find their rational solution in human practice and in understanding this practice" (*VIII*). In his zeal for closing the stream of existential practice hermetically against all deviations into contemplation, Marx expressly condemns any attempt at producing social change through education. Such an attempt would overlook the fact that the educators must be educated themselves; it would split society into two parts of which one is superior to the rest in a miraculous manner. Circumstances can be changed only through action; and this change and action coincide so that in fact a change of circumstances is a self-transformation; and this self-transformation is the very process that must be understood as "revolutionary practice" (*Thesis III*). The idea of a subject of cognition and morals as distinguished from objects of cognitive and moral action must be abolished; the subject itself must be conceived as "objective" (*gegenständlich*) and human activity as "objective activity." Reality, on the other hand, must not be conceived as object for a subject but as "sensuously human activity" (*sinnlich menschliche Tätigkeit*) (*Thesis I*). Thus, in terms of philosophical

tradition, revolutionary practice is defined as an existential stream in which the subject is objectified and the object subjectified. This is the position which Marx calls his "new materialism"; it is the position of "human society or social humanity" as distinguished from the position which recognizes the existence of individual man and bourgeois (*bürgerliche*) society (*Theses IX and X*).¹⁵

Critique of Heaven and Critique of the Earth

The Marxian critical practice starts with the critique of religion and it proceeds to the critique of politics and economics. The problem of this systematically second phase was formulated by Marx in his *Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*. "The critique of religion ends with the insight that man is the highest being for man; this implies the categorical imperative to overthrow all relationships in which man is a humiliated, oppressed, neglected, despised being."¹⁶

"The critique of religion is the presupposition of all critique." In the illusionary reality of heaven, man "has looked for the superman (*Übermensch*)"; instead he found the reflection of himself. Now he realizes that he himself is the superman; and he will no longer be satisfied with recognizing himself as the "non-man (*Unmensch*)" that he formerly believed himself to be. "Man makes religion, not religion man." "Religion is the self-consciousness and self-feeling of a man who either has not yet gained himself, or who has lost himself again." This man, however, (directed against Feuerbach!) is not an abstract being outside the world. "Man is the world of man," that is, state and society. This social world produces religion "as a perverted consciousness of the world because it is a perverted (*verkehrte*) world." Religion is the "general theory" of a perverted world. It gives "imaginary reality to human essence (*Wesen*) because human essence has no true reality." "The struggle against religion is the struggle against that world, of which religion is the spiritual aroma." Religious misery is the manifestation of real misery, and at the same time a protest against it. Religion is the cry of oppressed creature — "it is the opium of the people."¹⁷

¹⁵ For an entirely different interpretation of the *Theses on Feuerbach* the reader should refer to Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx* (London, 1936), pp. 272-307.

¹⁶ Karl Marx, *Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie. Einleitung* (1843) *Gesamtausgabe*, volume I/1, pp. 607 ff.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 607.

The destruction of religion, thus, is the beginning of the revolution, not its end. The "illusionary happiness of the people" must now be replaced by "its real happiness." The "imaginary flowers on the chain" have not been torn off in order that mankind now should wear an "unimaginative chain without consolation"; on the contrary, man should now throw away the chain and break the living flower.¹⁸ Disillusioned man should now regain his reason, and "move around himself as around his real sun." Now that the "beyond of truth" has disappeared, it is "the task of history" to establish "the truth of this world." "The critique of heaven changes into a critique of the earth," the critique of religion and theology into the critique of law and politics.¹⁹

Western Political and German Radical Revolution

Embarking on his critique of law and politics Marx did not criticize actual institutions; rather, he criticized Hegel's *Philosophy of Law*. In justifying this procedure, he made a contribution to the understanding of German politics and of its conflict with Western political culture that even today is well worth reading as a whole. In the present context, however, we must confine ourselves to his principle of interpretation.

Marx observed the time-lag in political development between Germany and the West. The English and French revolutions abolished the *ancien régime* in their areas and established the modern national state as the expression and instrument of bourgeois society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*). The revolutions were carried to success by a class, but they were experienced as representative revolutions of the nation. A revolution of this kind cannot be made with success unless certain conditions be fulfilled. That "a *part* of society emancipates itself and obtains *general* rule" is possible only if the revolutionary class can undertake "the general emancipation of society from its particular position." The political emancipation from the feudal regime can be experienced as generally valid only when the new values of economic and educational privileges become accessible to everybody — at least on principle. Since in fact this will hardly ever be the case, "no

18 *Op. cit.*, p. 607 f. The simile of the "imaginary flowers on the chain," etc., is probably the last transformation of the Rosicrucian symbolism of Hegel.

19 *Op. cit.*, p. 508.

class of society can play this role without evoking a moment (*ein Moment*) of enthusiasm in itself and in the masses, a moment in which it fraternizes and flows together with society at large, in which it can be taken for society and be experienced and recognized as its *general representative*." "Only in the name of universal rights of society can a particular class vindicate general rule for itself." "Revolutionary energy and spiritual pathos (*Selbstgefühl*)" are not sufficient for obtaining this emancipation. In order to achieve this "coincidence of a national revolution with the emancipation of a particular class," another class must exist which is experienced as the "social sphere of the notorious crime against the whole of society," so that the liberation from this class can appear as the general liberation. The "negative-general" importance of the French nobility and clergy conditioned the "positive-general" importance of the French bourgeoisie as the emancipating class.

In all these respects, the German political development is behind the times. No revolutions have occurred; an anachronistic *ancien régime* continues to exist. And there is no prospect of a revolution in the Western sense, for neither has Germany a class of such "courage and ruthlessness" that it could appear as the "negative representative" of society, nor does it have an estate of sufficient "breadth of the soul" and "revolutionary audacity" that even the momentary identification with the "soul of the people" would be possible. "In Germany the relation between the various spheres of society is not dramatic, it is epic." As a consequence, every sphere of German society "experiences its defeat, before it can celebrate a victory," develops its narrowness before it can unfold its generosity, is involved in its struggle with the lower class when it begins its struggle against the higher class. "The princes are engaged in a struggle against kingship, the bureaucrats against the nobility, the bourgeoisie against them all, while the proletarians already enter into their struggle against the bourgeoisie."²⁰

The difference of political development between the Western national states and Germany has important consequences. The Western revolutions are not the end of history. The modern state in its perfection has liberated man insofar as differences of religion and property no longer determine differences of political status for the indi-

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 617 ff.

vidual. "The perfect political state is by its nature the generic life of man in opposition to his material life." Nevertheless, the whole structure of "egoistic life" is retained as social life outside the sphere of the state. In the perfect political state man leads a double life: in political community he lives as the generic being, in society he lives as a private individual. The complete liberation through complete socialization of man is not yet achieved. "Political emancipation is a great progress"; nevertheless "it is not the last form of human emancipation"; it is only "the last form of human emancipation *within* the present world order."²¹ In Germany, as distinguished from the West, not even political emancipation has been achieved hitherto. But precisely because the German political situation is anachronistic and below serious discussion, German political speculation could abstract from this reality and instead, through Hegel, develop "the idea of the modern state" into its last consequences. "The Germans have *thought* in politics, what the other nations have *done*. Germany was their *theoretical conscience*." The incompleteness of human emancipation through the political state has come to consciousness in German political thought. The question is: can Germany achieve a practice, that is a revolution, *à la hauteur des principes*, lifting it not only "to the *official level* of modern nations, but to the *human height* that will be the next future of these nations?"²²

In his theory of the opposition between Germany and the Western nations, and in particular in the question just raised, Marx came closest to being a German national thinker. He was seriously concerned about the place of Germany among the nations. He saw the political misery that seemed to cut off all hope for a historical role of importance; but he also saw the splendid intellectual achievement. He felt himself to be a thinker who could draw out the practical consequences of the Hegelian philosophy of the state; but he was gloomy about the German people's power to become the carrier of the ultimate revolution for the liberation of mankind. Germany, he felt, has not scaled "the middle steps of political emancipation together with the modern nations." It has not reached in practice the steps which in theory it has passed. How could the "*salto mortale*" of the "radical revolution" be possible? Another end seems more prob-

²¹ Karl Marx, Bruno Bauer: *Die Judenfrage* (1843), *op. cit.*, volume I/1, pp. 584 ff.

²² *Einleitung*, pp. 613 f.

able: "One morning, Germany will find herself on the level of European decadence (*Verfall*), before she has ever reached the level of European emancipation."²³ This prophetic vision, however, was rejected by Marx. He did not consider a political revolution in the Western sense a possibility for Germany, but he still believed in the possibility of the radical revolution. "It is not the radical revolution that is a utopian dream for Germany, not the general human emancipation, but rather the partial revolution that is only political."²⁴ The German emancipation will never be achieved piecemeal by particular classes of society, as in the West, but it can be achieved at one stroke by a class which is part of the bourgeois society and at the same time not part of it, that is by the proletariat.²⁵

The proletariat is "an estate which is the dissolution of all estates," "a social sphere which has universal character through its universal suffering"; it has no particular claim because no particular injustice, but injustice as such, is committed against it; it has no historical title, it has nothing but the human title; it is a social sphere "which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating all other spheres of society"; it is "the complete loss of man and, therefore, cannot regain itself without regaining man completely." "The proletariat is the dissolution of society in form of a particular estate." "When the proletariat announces the dissolution of the present order of the world, it only reveals the secret of its existence, for it is in fact the dissolution of this order of the world." The proletariat, thus, will be the material weapon of philosophy, while in philosophy it will find its spiritual weapons. When the lightning of thought has struck into this soil of the people, the emancipation of the German into Man will be accomplished. "The head of this emancipation is philosophy, its heart is the proletariat. Philosophy cannot become reality without abolishing the proletariat, the proletariat cannot abolish itself without realizing philosophy."²⁶

This faith in the translation of philosophy into reality through the German proletariat, is supported by a historical reflection on the German Reformation. The faith in a revolution that starts with speculation makes sense in the light of the German past. "Germany's revolu-

²³ *Op. cit.*, p. 616.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 617.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 619 f.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 619-621.

tionary past is theoretical, it is the Reformation. At that time it was the *monk*, now it is the *philosopher*, in whose brain the revolution begins." Luther's Reformation was the first step of a German revolution. Luther broke the faith in authority, but he has put the authority of faith in its place. He has liberated man from external religiousness, but he has made religiousness the substance of man. Protestantism, thus, did not bring the true solution, but it certainly revealed the true task, that is, the struggle against the priestly substance of man. "The most radical fact of German history," the Peasant War, broke against the wall of the new Protestant theology. Today, when this theology itself has broken down, the anachronistic, political state will be broken by the new philosophy.²⁷ These passages show that Marx was perfectly aware of the connection between his own thought and German Protestantism. There is, indeed, an intelligible line of meaning running from Luther's destruction of ecclesiastic authority, through the destruction of dogmatic symbols in the generation of Strauss, Bruno Bauer, and Feuerbach, to the destruction of "all the gods," that is, of all authoritative order in Marx. While it would be incorrect to say that the way of Protestantism leads with any inner necessity from Luther to Hegel and Marx, it is true that Marxism is the final product of disintegration in one branch of German, liberal Protestantism.

Emancipation and Alienation

Emancipation is the general category under which Marx conceives the advancement of man to his complete freedom. "All emancipation is *reduction* of the human world, of relationships, to *man himself*." Religious emancipation is the reduction of religion to the religion-making consciousness of man, as accomplished by Feuerbach. "Political emancipation is the reduction of man, on the one hand to a member of bourgeois society, that is, to the *egoistic, independent* individual, on the other hand to the *citizen*, that is to the moral person." This schism of man must be overcome through the next and last step in emancipation. Only when "the real, individual man takes back the abstract citizen," only when he as individual man has become *generic being* (*Gattungswesen*) "in his empirical life, in his individual work, in his individual relationships," only when man "has

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 615.

recognized his '*forces propres*' as *social* forces and organized as such," only when, as a consequence, he "no longer separates social force from himself in the form of *political force*," is human emancipation completed.²⁸ The overcoming of the state is a historical problem which resembles in its structure the overcoming of religion. "The political constitution was hitherto the *religious sphere*, the *religion* of a people's life, it was the heaven of its generality in opposition to the *earthly existence* of its reality. . . . *Political life* in the modern sense is the *scholasticism* of a people's life."²⁹

The course of past history has been the "alienation" of man, the task of future history is his "emancipation." In alienation (or self-alienation) man loses himself to the beyond of religion and social institutions; through emancipation he draws these objectified sectors of his essence back into his existence. We have arrived at the core of the Marxian philosophy of history. The history of emancipation (from religious, through political, to ultimate social emancipation) is the reversal of the process of alienation. In order to arrive at the critical solution, the revolutionary thinker must have a critical understanding of the genesis of the evil. Since contemporary evil has its origin in the relation between man and nature, it can be overcome only through bringing nature under control of man so that freedom beyond nature can unfold. Since the vicissitudes of man's relation with nature are the subject-matter of history, we must trace the history of man from its most primitive beginnings, when man emerges from his animal condition; we must follow it through the various phases in which man becomes ever more deeply involved in the process of production, to the point of complete self-alienation; we must further study the possibilities of emancipation which grow parallel with increasing alienation; and we must, finally, conceive the idea of the revolutionary overthrow of the order of alienation and its replacement by the order of freedom.

Substance and Process of History

All critical history must start with certain "presuppositions." They must, however, not be of a dogmatic nature; they must be "real presuppositions," that is, "the real individuals, their actions and material

²⁸ *Zur Judenfrage*, op. cit., p. 599.

²⁹ *Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*, ad § 279, op. cit., p. 436.

conditions of life." The first presupposition is "the existence of living human individuals" with a bodily organization and a relation to the rest of nature which is conditioned by this organization.³⁰ Man distinguishes himself from animal as soon as he starts *producing* his means of life; in such production men indirectly produce their material life. Their way of production becomes their way of life (*Lebensweise*). From this starting point, Marx traces the differentiation of production from sexual reproduction and division of labor on the level of the family, through further differentiation on the tribal and other local levels, to the systems of production and division of labor under the conditions of modern national societies and their interrelation on a world-market. Parallel with this differentiation of production goes the development of ideas in politics, law, morals, religion and metaphysics in close correlation with the process of material production of life. "Consciousness can never be anything but conscious being (*Bewusstsein, bewusstes Sein*), and the being of man is his real life-process." "Ideologies" have no history of their own; they are a by-product of the material process. "It is not consciousness that determines life; it is life that determines consciousness." With the development of critical history, "philosophy loses its medium of existence." It can be replaced, at best, "by a summary of general results that can be abstracted from the study of the historical development of mankind." Such abstractions, however, are worthless if they be separated from real history. They must strictly serve the ordering of historical materials—in the manner in which Marx is doing it.³¹

The "material process of production" and its differentiation through division of labor are established as the irreducible substance of history. This process of differentiation contains an inevitable conflict of increasing acerbity, that is, the conflict between the interest of the working individual and the interest of the larger group of individuals who are engaged in production through division of labor and exchange of products. "As soon as labor is divided, a definite, exclusive range of activity is assigned to everybody; this range is imposed on him, he cannot escape it; he is hunter, fisher or herdsman, or critic, and he must remain within his range unless he wants to lose his means of life."³² While under more primitive technological con-

³⁰ *Deutsche Ideologie* (1844/45), *Gesamtausgabe*, volume V, p. 10.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 10-17.

³² *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

ditions such dependence on specialized activity is still bearable because even specialization on this level leaves a broad field for diversified human work, the situation becomes disastrous under conditions of industrial production for a world-market. "The fixation of social activity, the consolidation of our own product into an objective power (*sachliche Gewalt*) dominating us, growing out of control, crossing our expectations, destroying our calculations, is one of the principal factors in historical evolution."³³ "The more wealth he produces, and the more his production gains in power and volume, the poorer becomes the worker." "Work does not produce commodities only; it produces itself and the worker as a *commodity*." "The realization of work is its objectivation." "The worker puts his life into the object; but then his life is no longer his but the object's." "What the product of his work is, he is not." "The life that he has given to the object, opposes him as inimical and alien." "The worker becomes the serf of his object." "His work is external to his being." "He does not affirm, he negates himself in his work." "Only outside his work the worker is with himself, in his work he is outside himself." "He is at home when he does not work, and when he works he is not at home." "Hence his work is not voluntary but compulsory, it is *compulsory labor*. It is not a satisfaction of his wants, but only a means for satisfying wants outside his work." "The result is that the working man can feel himself free only in his animal functions of eating, drinking and procreating, and perhaps in his housing, ornaments, etc., while in his specifically human functions he is only an animal." "Eating, drinking and procreating certainly are genuine human functions, too. But in the abstraction which separates them from the wider range of human activity and makes them ultimate and sole aims, they are beastly (*tierisch*)." Man is distinguished from animal through the universality of his relation with nature; he does not produce for necessity alone; but can give form to his material existence through science and beauty. This whole range of productive activity which distinguishes human life is degraded to the level of a means of life. The productive, free existence of man "becomes a means for his physical existence." This "alienation" of human productivity is inherent in the division of labor; it has nothing to do with higher or lower wages. A rise in wages would be nothing "but a better compensation of

³³ *Op. cit.*, p. 22 f.

slaves; it would not for the worker and his work reconquer their human destiny and dignity." "Even an equality of income, as demanded by Proudhon, changes only the relation of the worker to his work into that of all men to their work. Society would then become the Capitalist in the abstract."³⁴ The conditions of existence in modern society have become an accident for the worker over which he has no control and "over which no *social* organization can give him control."³⁵

The last sentences might destroy the assumption (which is frequently made) that Marx was impressed by the material misery of the worker in his time, and that with the material improvement of the worker's lot the necessity for the revolution would disappear. Social reform is *not* a remedy for the evil which Marx has in mind. This evil is the growth of the economic structure of modern society into an "objective power" to which man must submit by threat of starvation. The principal and characteristic features which appear off and on in the descriptions of Marx can be reduced to the following:

1. The separation of the worker from his tools. This characteristic is determined by industrial technology. No man can individually own and operate the tools of modern industrial production. The "factory" or, generally, the "place of work," cannot be the "home."

2. Job dependence. This characteristic has the same determining cause. No man can earn a living in an industrial system unless he finds a job in some "enterprise" which assembles the tools for production and markets the product.

3. Division of labor. No man can produce any whole product. The process of production must be centrally planned, and the single worker is confined to the phase in the process assigned to him. Marx was very much aware of the supreme insult to human dignity which lies in the fact that at the end of his life, when a man summarizes what he has accomplished, he may have to say: All my life I have spent in cooperating in the production of a certain type of Grand Rapids furniture and thereby degraded humanity in myself and others.

4. Specialization. This characteristic is intimately connected with

³⁴ *Oekonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (1844), *Gesamtausgabe*, volume III, pp. 82-93.

³⁵ *Deutsche Ideologie*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

the preceding one. Even if the total product is not an insult to human dignity, the productivity of man has no appreciable range for unfolding if his work is confined to a small sector of production on which as a whole he has no influence.

5. Economic interdependence. No man can live a whole life if his existence is permanently threatened, not by natural catastrophes as in the case of a peasant, but by social actions beyond his control — be they new inventions, or the closing of a market through tariff, or miscalculation of management, or change in customers' taste, or a general economic crisis.

Socialistic Man

The enumerated characteristics are those of an industrial system of production. Since Marx did not wish to abolish the industrial system, and in particular since he was fully aware that no change in social organization, as for instance public property of instruments of production, could abolish these evils, the question arises: what precisely did he want to achieve by a communist revolution? This is the crucial point of the Marxian system of thought, and it is the point which ordinarily is neglected. Marx has not said much about it; but he has said enough for making his intentions clear beyond doubt. Wild as it may sound, he wanted to retain the industrial system of production with its inevitable technological differentiation of work, but he wanted to abolish human specialization. Man was supposed to emerge from the revolution as an integrally productive being that by his own will would work one day at a machine, the next day in an office, and the third day as a *litterateur*. A primitive, but unmistakable formulation of the idea occurs among his complaints that division of labor produces such occupational fixations as hunter, fisher, etc. This evil will be overcome in "communist society, where nobody has an exclusive range of activity, but everybody can train himself in every branch; where society regulates general production and thereby makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another thing tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, to fish in the afternoon, to be a husbandman in the evening, and to indulge in literary work after supper, as it pleases me, without any necessity for me ever to become a hunter, fisherman, husbandman or critic." ³⁶

³⁶ *Deutsche Ideologie*, op. cit., p. 22.

Again, incredible as it may sound, this is the vision which Marx transfers to the situation of the modern industrial system. The revolution in face of "alienation" is necessary in order for men to regain their "self-activity" (*Selbstbetätigung*) as well as to secure their existence. It will assume the form of an "appropriation of the existing totality of productive forces." Under international division of labor, these forces exist in the form of a universal, world-wide system of interdependence. "The appropriation, therefore, must have a universal character which corresponds to the universality of productive forces and commerce. The appropriation of these forces is in itself nothing but the development of individual faculties in correspondence with the material instruments of production. Hence, the appropriation of a totality of instruments of production is the development of a totality of faculties in the individuals." In order to achieve a human revolution of this kind, a certain type of individual is needed. Only the proletarians are capable of performing the feat because their individual existence is no longer bound up with a special type of property that would limit the interest of their activity. All former revolutions were limited (*borniert*), because the self-activity of the revolutionary class was limited by its specific kind of private property. The proletarian without property is the fit agent to bring a mass of productive instruments "under each individual," and to "subsume property under all." Moreover, the method of the revolution is determined by the universal character of the industrial system. Only a universal association of proletarians on the world-scale can, through its revolution, break the power of the present economic and social structure; and only such a universal revolution will develop the universal character and the energy that are necessary to execute the appropriation. Only after this revolution will "self-activity coincide with material life." Only then "are individuals developed into total individuals," "work will have changed into self-activity," and the "hitherto conditioned commerce will have changed into the commerce of individuals as such." Division of labor cannot be abolished by forgetting about it; the "individuals must subsume the objective forces under themselves and thereby abolish (*aufheben*) division of labor. This is impossible without community. Only in community with others does the individual have the means at his disposal to develop his faculties in all directions."³⁷

³⁷ *Deutsche Ideologie*, op. cit., pp. 57 f. and 63 f. The reader should also compare *Kapital*, volume I (4th edition, 1890), pp. 39-46. The thought is substantially the same

History, thus, is moving toward the appearance of the "total individual," or — in other contexts — of "socialistic man." Man must recover completely from his alienation in order to become the perfectly free and independent being which in essence he is. The "liberation from property" will be the last act of this drama. In a revealing page Marx has formulated the connection between this conception of history and his original revolt against God. A being — he says — "is independent only when it stands on its own feet; and it stands on its own feet only when it owes its existence to nobody but itself." A man who lives by grace of somebody else is dependent — and I live most completely by the grace of somebody else when he "has created my life," when the sources of my life lie outside myself. The belief in creation is the source of the feeling of dependence; and this idea of "creation" — Marx reflects sadly — is rather deep-rooted in the consciousness of man. The idea that nature should be through itself, as well as the idea that man should exist through himself, is "inconceivable to him because it contradicts all tangible experiences (*Handgriefflichkeiten*) of practical life." Man knows himself as a link in the chain of being, and inevitably he will feel urged to ask where this chain be suspended. Marx has laid his finger on the resistance to the idea of a "superman": as long as man remains aware of his *conditio humana*, as long as he retains his consciousness of his "tangible experience" of dependence, he will not be easily persuaded that through the mystery of revolution he will be transfigured into a self-contained divinity. Moreover, Marx knows that he is not struggling against a "belief" in creation or in any other symbol that might furnish an answer to the question; the resistance rather arises from the experience and from the question itself. The question must not be raised — or his idea is finished. It is the same situation in which Comte found himself when his positivistic restriction of knowledge to the observation of world-immanent regularities ran into the quest for the *arché*, for the origin of being. And Marx resorts in this situation to the same desperate measure as Comte: since from the immanentist position there is no answer to the question, the question itself must be sup-

as in *Deutsche Ideologie*. There occur, however, such famous formulations as the *Fetischcharakter der Waarenwelt* (p. 39), the very revealing comparison of the post-revolutionary industrial society with the situation of the many-sided Robinson (p. 45), and the reflections on Christianity as the ideological environment in which the idea of the limited individual can thrive (p. 45 f.).

pressed. Marx issues a dictatorial prohibition against asking such questions — they are “abstractions”; they have “no sense”; stick to the reality of being and becoming!³⁸ At this critical juncture Marx, like Comte, declares his intellectual bankruptcy by the refusal to answer questions. And then he continues with the ominous definition: “socialistic man” is the man who does not ask such questions.³⁹

Crude Communism and True Communism

For socialistic man the “whole so-called history of the world” is nothing but the production of man through the work of man. In this process he has under his eyes “the irresistible proof of his birth: of his genesis through himself.” The essentiality (*Wesenhaftigkeit*) of man in nature is given to sensual intuition; in the face of this experience the quest for an *alien* being beyond nature and man becomes a practical impossibility. “*Atheism*, as the denial of this non-essentiality (*Unwesentlichkeit*) no longer makes sense, for atheism is a *negation of God* and through this negation posits the *existence of man*.” Socialism needs no mediation; it starts right-away with the sensuous consciousness of man in nature as true essence. It is the positive self-consciousness of man, not mediated through denial of religion. And in the same manner, “true life” is the positive reality of man, not mediated through abolition of private property, that is, through communism. In the next phase of history, communism will be positive as “negation of the negation,” — “but communism as such is not the aim of human development, — it is not the form of human society.”⁴⁰ Communism, like atheism, is the counter-idea to a historical state that must be overcome. Marx, like Bakunin, is aware of the danger that lies in facile attempts at giving content to the vision of the future by elaborating a catalogue of concrete demands which can be nothing but negatives of present evils. Communism is not an institutional reform; it is, indeed, a change in the nature of man.

With this danger in view, Marx has distinguished carefully between “crude communism” (*roher Kommunismus*) and “true communism” or socialism. Crude communism is the “positive expression” of abol-

³⁸ *Oekonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (1844), *op. cit.*, volume III, pp. 124 f.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 125, line 18 ff.

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 125 f.

ished private property; it establishes "general private property"; it is only a "generalization and perfection of private property." The domination of the property in things is so enormous that crude communism wants to annihilate everything that cannot be owned as private property by everybody. It considers physical, immediate ownership the only purpose of life. It does not abolish the worker's existence but extends it to everybody; it wants to destroy all distinguishing talent by violence, etc. The nature of this type of communism becomes particularly clear in its idea of a communization of women. "We may say that the idea of a community of women reveals the secret of this crude and thoughtless communism." Woman leaves marriage and enters into general prostitution; the world of wealth leaves private property and enters into general prostitution with the community. Such communism, "in its radical negation of the *personality* of man," is a continuation of the former private property. "The general *envy* which constitutes itself as power is only a hidden form in which *avarice* restores itself and satisfies itself under a different form." Competition under conditions of private property is envy and desire of levelling turned against the greater private property. The crude communist manifests the perfection of this desire for levelling. The abolition of private property is not a true appropriation; it rather destroys civilization by its return to an unnatural simplicity of poor people who are not beyond private property but have not yet arrived at it. Hence, the community of crude communism is nothing but a community of work and of equality of income paid out by the community as the general capitalist. "Crude Communism, thus, is only a manifestation of the rascality (*Niedertracht*) of private property that wants to establish itself as a positive community."⁴¹

True communism is the return of man to himself as social man "within the whole wealth of human development up to this point." It is a completed humanistic naturalism, "the true solution of the conflict between man and nature." "It is the solved riddle of history and knows itself as the solution." Communist society "is the true resurrection of nature, the realized naturalism of man and the realized humanism of nature."⁴²

⁴¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 111-113.

⁴² *Op. cit.*, pp. 114 and 116.

The Manifesto

The genesis of the idea is substantially completed with its appearance on the world-scene as the *Communist Manifesto* (December 1847-January 1948).⁴³ As far as the ideas of history, revolution and communism are concerned, the *Manifesto* contains nothing that is new; on the contrary, it contains considerably less than the result of our preceding analysis, as is inevitable in a document which has no theoretical intentions but merely wants to propagandize. Nevertheless, we must briefly dwell on the formulations, if not on the ideas, for the *Manifesto* is a masterpiece of political rhetoric. After a century, its formulae have neither lost their revolutionary pathos nor their effectiveness on the political scene.

In the Preamble the authors fix the scale of importance for their pronunciamiento. Communism is recognized as a force by all European powers. It is a spectre that haunts Europe. The Pope and the Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French radicals and German policemen have allied themselves in a "Holy Chase" to lay the spectre. Such recognition by the old powers creates an obligation for the Communists to clarify their views and to submit them to the public. The new world force enters the lists against the powers of the old world.

The first section of the *Manifesto* develops the historical perspective of Communism. "The history of all society up to the present is the history of class struggles." There have always been classes and estates, oppressors and oppressed. Modern society, however, is distinguished from all earlier periods through the simplicity of the pattern. "Our whole society is splitting more and more into two great hostile camps, into two great classes facing each other — Bourgeoisie and Proletariat." The appealing pattern of Manichaean simplicity is set; there are only two forces, good and evil; anybody who is not on the good side, inevitably is on the bad side. The *Manifesto*, then, follows this pattern and deals, first, with the rise of the bourgeoisie and, second, with the proletariat.

The man of the bourgeoisie has risen from the serf of the Middle Ages to become the operator of modern industry and commerce spanning the globe; and as his political instrument he has created the modern representative state. "The bourgeoisie has a most revolutionary role in history." The description of the revolutionary role

⁴³ *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei, Gesamtausgabe*, volume VI, pp. 523 ff.

itself begins with reflections on the bourgeoisie as the destroyer of "all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relationships." But the derogatory beginnings soon change into a praise of the achievements of the bourgeoisie such as no enlightened progressivist has ever written. The bourgeoisie "has accomplished much greater miracles than Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts and gothic cathedrals." It has made "production and consumption of all countries cosmopolitan"; it has "drawn away the national soil from under the feet of industry"; the old "local and national self-sufficiency and exclusiveness" are replaced by a general interdependence of all nations. And what has been done for material has also been done for intellectual production. "National onesidedness and limitation becomes more and more impossible, and from the many national and local literatures there rises a world literature." Through improvement of communications "even the most barbaric nations are drawn into civilization." All nations must adopt bourgeois methods of production, unless they want to perish. "In one word, it has created a world in its own image." It has created our great cities, and "torn an appreciable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life." "It has made the country-side dependent on the city, the barbaric or half-barbaric countries on the civilized ones, the peasant nations on the bourgeois nations, the Orient on the Occident." In its class rule of barely a century the bourgeoisie has created more massive and colossal forces of production than all preceding generations together." In brief: we hear the authentic tones of a Condorcet, with the massive pride in the expected complete destruction of all historical civilizations and the transformation of all mankind into a universal bourgeois society.

The splendor of the bourgeoisie, however, is transitory like everything in the world except Communism. The bourgeoisie must go and its achievements will be inherited by the successor that has grown under its rule, by the proletariat, "the class of modern workers who live only as long as they can find work." The characterization of proletarian existence contains nothing new. Of interest, however, is the description of the phases in the struggle. "Its struggle against the bourgeoisie begins with its existence." At the beginning we have no more than individual and local struggles against individual and local oppression. With the expansion of industry, the masses of proletarians grow and their common situation becomes more visible to them. Coalitions and associations are formed; local revolts break out.

Momentary victories are followed by defeats; the real result is the nationwide coalition and the centralization of the class struggle. The proletariat is on its way toward organization as a class and party. The progressive proletarianization of ever larger groups in society throws educated people into the proletariat. And the disintegration of the old society induces small groups of the ruling class to become renegade and to join the revolutionary class which has the future in its hands. "As formerly a part of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a part of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular a part of the bourgeois-ideologists who have worked themselves through to an understanding of the historical movement." Thus, we have finally arrived at Marx and Engels themselves, the bourgeois ideologists who can tell the proletarians what the historical process is all about and provide intellectual leadership in their capacity as organizers of the Communist Party.

The second section of the *Manifesto* deals with the relation between proletarians and Communists. Here we find a new set of ideas concerning the function of communist leadership in the proletarian struggle against the bourgeoisie. The opening sentences are of particular importance because they contain the principles which later were developed into the idea of Communism as the universal church of the proletariat. The section begins humbly enough: "The Communists are not a separate party in opposition (*gegenüber*) to other workers' parties." But the next sentence turns this rejection of rivalry into a universalist claim: "They have no interests separate from those of the proletariat as a whole." The implications are far-reaching, for this sentence is neither a statement of fact that would be open to verification, nor is it a program; it is rather the fundamental dogma which declares the spirit of the proletariat as a whole to be residing in the Communist Party. Any programmatic intention is explicitly rejected by the following sentence: "They do not set up principles of their own by which they want to shape the proletarian movement." The Communists are not distinguished from other proletarian groups by principles and programs but by the universal level of their practice. "In the various national struggles of proletarians, they emphasize, and put to the fore, the common interests of the proletariat as a whole, independent of nationality"; and: "In the various successive stages through which the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie must pass, they always represent the interests of the movement as a whole."

Beyond regional and temporal diversification of the struggle, there looms the central leadership of the Communists. And, indeed, the next paragraph formulates the vanguard-principle: "In their practice, the Communists are the most resolute, ever forward pushing, section in the workers' parties of all countries; in their theory, they have the advantage over the great mass of the proletariat through their insight into conditions, course and general results of the proletarian movement. In their immediate aims, for the rest, the Communists do not differ from other proletarian parties; these aims are: "formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of bourgeois rule, conquest of political power through the proletariat."

The remainder of the second section deals with exposition and defense of the ultimate aims of Communism. The authors stress the non-programmatic character of these aims. "The theoretical theses of Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented or discovered by this or that world-reformer (*Weltverbesserer*). "They are no more than general expressions of actual relationships in a real class struggle, in a historical movement that goes on under our very eyes." Communist theses, thus, must not be misunderstood as programmatic demands for changing an actual state of things; on the contrary, they reveal the actual state of things and suggest that the tendencies, actually inherent in the historical process, are carried to their full realization. Hence, the accusations levelled against Communism are unfounded. Their opponents charge the Communists with the intention of abolishing private property. The *Manifesto* agrees that this is the substance of Communist theory. But what does this abolition mean in face of the fact that the socially relevant property is capitalist property and the great mass of the people has no such property anyway? And if it is taken from those who have it, is that really expropriation? No, for "capital is a collective product and can be set into motion only through the common activity of many members of society, and in last resort only through the common activity of all members of society. Capital, therefore, is not a personal, it is a social power"; and to be a capitalist means "to hold not a purely personal, but a social position in production." "If, therefore, capital is converted into communal property, belonging to all members of society, such conversion does not transform personal property into social property. Only the social character of property is transformed. It loses its class character." The so-called expropria-

tion, thus, only transforms an actual situation into a principle of public order. The same type of argument is, then, applied to the charges against abolition of bourgeois marriage, of nationality, of religion and of "eternal truths, like freedom, justice, etc."

The theses of Communism lift the march of history into consciousness. They are not a program for interference with an established order; they are an insight into an order that is coming into being, that is growing under the disintegrating order of the old society. The Communists and their followers can feel themselves the executors of the law of history. Again we must note the strong touch of Condorcet in this conception of the Communists as the directorate of mankind on its march toward the realm of freedom. Nevertheless, history does not march all by itself; the directorate must lend a helping hand. The raw-material for the realization of the aim is present: the proletarians as a class outside society, without property and without nationality ("The workers have no country"). But this material must be shaped through the awakening of class-consciousness, and then the revolution itself must be undertaken. The conquest of power will be a prolonged process; between bourgeois rule and free society, there will be interposed the transitional period of the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁴⁴ The first step will be the elevation of the proletariat to the place of the ruling class in democracy. The political domination will then be used "gradually to wrest all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., the proletariat organized as ruling class, and as rapidly as possible to increase the total of productive forces." This can be done only "through despotic interventions in the right of property and bourgeois conditions of production"; such measures may appear as indefensible by economic standards but they are inevitable for the purpose of revolutionizing the whole method of production. In the course of this development, class-differences will disappear, production will be concentrated in the hands of the associated individuals, public power will lose its political character because it is no longer an instrument of class rule, and, finally, the old society will be replaced by "an association in which everybody's free development is the condition for the free development of all." The *Manifesto* ends with the famous call to revolutionary association: "The proletarians have

⁴⁴ The term is not yet used in the *Manifesto*, though the subject-matter is discussed.

nothing to lose in it but their chains. They have a world to win. Proletarians of all countries unite!"

Tactics

The *Manifesto* was published in February, 1848. In 1850, when it was clear that the time for a proletarian world-revolution had not yet come, the eschatological excitement of the *Manifesto* subsided and the problems of revolutionary tactics came to the fore. We may conclude this study of the genesis of the Marxian idea with a few passages on tactics from the *Address to the Bund der Kommunisten*, of March, 1850.

The immediate problem for Communists was no longer the seizure of power in a democratic revolution. The democrats who were capable of winning a revolution were not communists. The immediate problem was the alliance with revolutionary democratic groups wherever they started moving and the ruthless fight against the allies on the morning after the common victory. It was already substantially the situation that we have experienced in the Popular Front politics of the 1930's and the resumption of the fight against democracy after the victory. Marx informs his listeners that "the democratic petty-bourgeois want to conclude the revolution as fast as possible" as soon as they have taken care of their own interests. But "it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent until all more or less propertied classes are removed from power, until state power is conquered by the proletariat and until the association of proletarians has advanced not only in one country but in all important countries of the world to the point where rivalry between proletarians in different countries has ceased and at least the decisive productive forces are concentrated in their hands. We are not interested in a change in private property but only in its annihilation, not in conciliation of class antagonisms but in the abolition of classes, not in reforms of present society but in the foundation of a new one."⁴⁵ In order to carry on the fight, as far as possible a stabilization of the political situation must be prevented. During the conflict as well as immediately afterward, the proletarians must counteract all attempts at calming down the revolutionary excitement. The democratic parties must

⁴⁵ *Ansprache der Zentralbehörde an den Bund*, reprinted in Karl Marx, *Enthüllungen über den Kommunistenprozess zu Köln* (Berlin, 1914), p. 130.

be held to their most radical promises and their most terroristic threats. Mob violence should not be prevented or merely tolerated; it should be fostered and organized by the Communists in order to compromise the democrats.⁴⁶ In the special German case, the Communists must oppose any attempt at a federative construction of the constitution. "Under no circumstances must it be tolerated that every village, city and province can oppose revolutionary activity which must proceed from a center in order to be most effective."⁴⁷ When a constitutional settlement is reached at last, the Communists must top every legislative reform measure proposed by the democrats, by a more revolutionary demand of their own. "When the petty-bourgeois propose the purchase of railroads and factories, the workers must demand that these railroads and factories should be confiscated by the government without compensation because they are the property of reactionaries. When the democrats propose a proportional tax, the workers demand a progressive one; when the democrats propose a moderately progressive one the workers insist on a tax which rises so fast in the upper bracket that big capital will be ruined. When the democrats propose a regulation of the public debt, the workers demand a declaration of public bankruptcy. Hence, the demands of the workers must always be guided by the concessions and measures of the democrats."⁴⁸

The details of the advice will change with the situation. The pattern is clear and well-known to all of us: it is the systematic disruption of society in the hope of creating such disorder that the Communist minority can rise to victory.

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁴⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 137.

